

Miss Grannis' Decision

By A. M. DAVIES OGDEN
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It is so fatally easy for a misund-

er to arise. Johnson, galloping swiftly through the long lane of overhanging June green, was musing somewhat bitterly upon this fact. It was over a month now since he had seen Helen Grannis, a month which had done a great deal toward quickening a spark hitherto not entirely recognized into a vivid flame. He had tried to see her, but unsuccessfully, and now his thoughts were brooding, as often before, over that last unfortunate meeting. Was he to blame or she? Yet how could the fault be his?

Once again he went back mentally to the beginning—that day when he had telegraphed to ask if she would ride. They had often spoken of so doing, and this had been his first opportunity. The answer had been that she would be at the club at 4 o'clock. Johnson, promptness itself, cantered over from the stable at 4 precisely. There he waited. He waited until half after 4; he waited until a quarter of 5. There was no sign of Miss Grannis. At last reluctantly he rode toward the park, wondering what could have happened. The first person he met, walking her horse slowly down the main drive in the direction of the gates, was the girl herself, and with her, talking eagerly, was Ransom Sinclair, the man of all others whom Johnson most detested.

For a moment Johnson had stared, really incredulous, unable to trust his eyes. Then, with a formal lifting of his hat, he was past the dark red mounting to his cheek and rage in his soul. Had she forgotten the engagement, or had he deliberately thrown him over for Sinclair—Sinclair with his millions, who could give her everything?

In the sudden blackness revealed by the flash of jealousy Johnson realized for the first time how much this slender, dainty girl, with her pretty little air of stateliness, meant to him. He had hardly gone a mile before the impulse which had made him bow and pass on looked the height of ridiculousness. Of course there was some mistake. Why had he not stopped and asked? But, although he turned at once, it was too late; the two had vanished.

He had telephoned that night. Miss Grannis was out for dinner. He had called the next afternoon. Miss Grannis was not at home. He could not write, for there was nothing to say. One could not ask a lady why she had chosen to ride with another. The week passed, and when he tried calling once more the house was closed. He found that the family had departed for their country place.

Johnson was in despair, but it was not entirely a bad thing for him; it taught him a lot. As he turned in now at the Newlands place and dropped off his horse some one moving down by the tennis court suddenly brought his heart into his mouth. Could it be she? He knew that Miss Grannis and Ida Newlands were great friends. Was it possible she might be stopping here for a week end? With thumping pulses he went forward. It was! And he might never have known! Somehow he managed to answer properly the greetings of Ida and the men grouped about them he turned to Miss Grannis.

He was unreasonable enough to be disappointed when the girl gave him merely a conventional smile. He felt that he was the one with the right to be angry. Ida Newlands looked sharply at them both. She knew Helen Grannis well enough to divine that something had occurred.

Now, as she saw Johnson, after a moment, turn aside, her nimble wit leaped to a sudden guess at the truth. And as she caught Johnson's flush as Sinclair came across the lawn her conviction deepened. But what could be done? In this last month Sinclair had been pushing his advantage hard. She knew that Helen was wavering. Ida did not fancy Sinclair; it was her brother who had asked him today. And she did like Johnson. With a swift inspiration she jumped to her feet.

"Let's have some tennis!" she exclaimed. "Helen, I will challenge you and Mr. Johnson to try to beat Mr. Sinclair and myself. Here's your racket," pretending not to see the girl's reluctance. It was the only way she could think of to bring them together.

Johnson could put up a strong game. He was tall, with long legs and arms that seemed to cover every corner of the court. And Helen had a clean, telling stroke. Sinclair, however, was no mean adversary. They would have to play up. But Johnson was not thinking of tennis. This was his chance. He must make the most of it before he joined that chattering group. As he brought the balls to Miss Grannis for her service he looked down at her for a moment.

"Why did you not come to the club that day?" he asked abruptly. "I waited and waited."

"Waited!" echoed the girl. "Why?" "Waited!" interrupted Sinclair, and Helen fished a ball over the net. Johnson, his heart beginning to beat fast, tightened the grip on his racket. There had been surprise, unmistakable surprise, in Helen's eyes.

"Did you not expect me to meet you at the club?" he demanded as they changed courts.

"You left that point," was the im-

patient response. "No, of course not. I always mount at the park entrance." "But the maid said—" persisted Johnson.

"Then the maid was mistaken. Ah, be careful," as he nearly missed a returned ball.

A strange desire not to be beaten had suddenly sprung to life in her breast. They must win this set, she and Johnson. They must not be beaten by Sinclair. She looked across the net at his red, rather heavy face. Could she marry him? Her family had hoped for it. He was a splendid match, of course—and yet what did Harry Johnson mean by asking why she had not come to the club? She had told the maid to say that she would be at the park entrance and then to telephone the club for her horse.

"Waited there an hour," said Johnson. "And then to meet you coming out of the park—with another man! What could I think?"

"Ah," said the girl, with a quick inward breath. Couldn't he have known that she was only walking her horse up and down while she waited? The meeting with Sinclair had been pure chance. She, too, had waited, growing more and more annoyed with the awkward position in which she found herself; annoyed also by Sinclair's veiled remarks upon Johnson's tardiness, his polite wonder, and then to have Johnson appear, raise his hat and pass on. The girl bit her lip again at the memory.

Then suddenly as she caught the look in his eager, earnest eyes her own softened. After all, he had a bad time too. And all through that stupid Marine's having the messages confused. With an impulsive gesture she turned.

"Do play!" she exclaimed. "We must get this set."

Sinclair, rather sulky at being forced to play on a hot afternoon, had hitherto not chosen to exert himself, letting the games go to his adversaries, but now he was beginning to be interested.

If they were to win, Johnson must concentrate. And Johnson, all at once infected by something in the girl's manner, straightened himself. The other side should not win a single game.

Love three, love four! Sinclair, subtly aware of an unwanted tension in the air, strove his utmost, unwillingly. Johnson, his mouth shut hard, played as though muscled with steel. Love five! Helen was breathless, her lips parted. Love six! Set!

With a great sigh, Johnson faced her. "We've won!" he whispered exultingly, just loud enough for her to hear. Helen, her eyes unfathomable, glanced for a moment across at Sinclair—Sinclair with his millions. Then, the sweetest, tenderest smile curving her mobile mouth, she lifted her face to Johnson.

"Yes," she said softly, "a love match."

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